

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Fiscal Year 2005

FY 05 was a quiet year for Design Review Board (DRB) in terms of permits for new businesses, with only 13 sign reviews. The Board did discuss ongoing public projects such as the sidewalk improvements and an assortment of Town Meeting warrant articles that impact the public landscape throughout Amherst.

Public Projects

Sidewalks in Downtown – DRB spent many evenings reviewing design and layout options for the revised sidewalk implementation scheme. The Board also considered layouts of trees and public amenities for North Pleasant Street.

South Pleasant Street Pedestrian Crossings – DRB reviewed the different crosswalks for South Pleasant Street as developed by Amherst College and Berkshire Design Associates. The final phase of this work completes the pedestrian access to campus across these two major vehicular roads through the Town center. (FY 03 and FY 04 saw improvements to College Street.) A combination of change in materials and planting beds to enhance the protected island, as well as signage and signal lights makes this area much safer for all pedestrians. This portion of the crosswalk project also greatly enhances this significant southern gateway to downtown, signaling the approach to Amherst center with material details and plantings. Vehicular traffic speed had been further reduced, protecting pedestrians as they cross.

Groff Park Comfort Station – The DRB reviewed designs and siting for the Groff Park Comfort Station. Recommendations were made for orientation, windows and finishes. This project was designed by the DPW.

Pomeroy Village Center Design – The DRB continues to review progress and designs for this important village center in South Amherst.

Permit Referrals from Other Boards – The Board remains committed to fostering the development of public space throughout the Town and assisting other boards in any way possible.

Private Projects

FY 05 saw minimal change to commercial space along Main Street and North and South Pleasant Street. With the Amherst Cinema Project finally underway, the Board had the opportunity to review designs for that major new development in downtown Amherst.

Amherst Cinema – The Board reviewed the designs for the building complex which includes the Cinema, commercial storefront space on Amity street and commercial space above on the second floor. Designs for overall signage for the Cinema-complex, as well as color and finishes for the building were discussed. Individual tenants for the store front spaces have been presenting their signs for review as the spaces are leased.

Judie's – Improvements were made to the façade after considerable repairs to the roof.

Signs

FY 05 sign reviews included: Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, La Cucina di Pinnocchio (new awning), Deals Too, Elegant Nail Spa, Bank of America, Yankee Mattress Factory, Earthworks Gallery, 29 Cottage Street Medical Offices, Salon Divine, -Green Market Farm Stores, Crazy Noodles (new awning and sign), Trade Roots (relocation of existing sign).

Town Meeting Warrant Articles

CPA Funding – DRB supported the Community Preservation Act Committee in its recommendations for funding historic preservation projects such as the restoration of headstones in the West Cemetery, Town Hall masonry restoration and the landscapes at the Emily Dickinson Museum.

Bicycle Lane on Main St – - DRB referred this article to the Select Board for further study. The DRB feels strongly that a comprehensive plan for bicycle access throughout the downtown area is necessary.

Wentworth Farm Conservation – DRB has not changed its position since its previous referral in 2002 regarding this parcel. The Board strongly opposes locking in this site when minimal development will eventually be required to support smart growth and sustainable development of this important area of town. The bulk of the parcel is permanently protected by virtue of the wetlands present on the site and adjacent to it. DRB continues to support the protection and enhancement of all the Town's village centers.

Zoning OSCD – - DRB supported this warrant article for Open Space Community Development since it would address the flaw in the current OSCD procedure. Requiring an additional review step that allows community participation in the early stages of project design can only help reduce conflicts that are exacerbated by a single-step process.

Amherst Design Review Board

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